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# Creating Action Steps (Small Steps for Big Results)

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The *Fresh Conversations* program invites participants to create an action step to be practiced until we meet again next month. Why? The action step(s) is a way of making a healthy change (ex. eat more fruits/vegetables, eat or drink more low-fat milk products, regular exercise) by breaking it into small, realistic steps that can be taken immediately-within 24-48 hours.

*Fresh Conversations* has several nutrition messages (Training Guide, page 2) that will be emphasized in the newsletter. For practice, let's pick one like 'balancing calories with activity.'

Action steps can be sparked by an ah-ha moment. For instance, in the newsletter you find something that is intriguing or someone in the group makes a point that you had never considered. You ask yourself, could that make a difference for me? The January, 2014, newsletter (page 2) has an article about watching television and exercising. Let's take a moment to read.

What is the 'big result' message in the article?

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That is the 'big result' message, but do you feel a little overwhelmed and not too sure of what to do with the message? Are you considering increasing your physical activity? Perhaps this could be a way to begin.

## How could the big change be broken down into small steps? (Write samples)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Each of these could be small steps that add up to increasing exercise to balance caloric intake. But there are some parts missing. You will be more satisfied with your progress if the action step is 1) is something you want to do, 2) achievable and 3) specific. How could we edit the small steps?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

It will take time for participants to catch on to this technique but your support will help them become skilled at creating action steps.

### **How to Use Action Steps**

First action steps can be a personal motivation for participants to reach for the big results. At each meeting encourage each person to create at least one action step that can begin within 24-48 hours. If they delay, they are less likely to try the action step.

Participants value what their peers do and believe. Because of this, it is important to have participants share their action steps during meetings. Older adults stating publically how they plan to eat more vegetables or be more active, can encourage other older adults to take similar, small steps. At the conclusion of a meeting make sure to save time for this activity.

Facilitators are encouraged to write down samples of the action steps the participants are planning. These notes can be used at the next meeting to recall what had been discussed during the meeting and to follow up on the successes and challenges that participants encountered.

If several participants are interested in similar action steps, it could be an idea for programming at the senior center. Share the ideas with the site manager.

If you have a person who is excited about the outcome of their action step, ask questions. It could lead to a testimonial that could be used in a future newsletter.

### **The Person Who Doesn't Make Action Plans**

If the person refuses to make a commitment, talk with him/her before or after the meeting and ask him/her about it. If you can identify why the person won't, you can probably help him/her through the resistance or difficulty. As facilitators, however, we cannot make anyone do anything if he/she does not want to do it. When the group participants are sharing action steps don't give more attention to a person not creating an action step than those with action steps.